

30 Years of Soil Conservation = 30 Years of Water Quality Improvements
or
“6,818 Miles of Dump Trucks”

Most people view “soil conservation” as reducing erosion and maintaining our soil resource, which is absolutely right. But, few recognize the relationship between “soil conservation” and “water quality”. Sediment is the number one nonpoint-source pollutant of the nation’s waters. In addition, nutrients attached to soil particles represent a major pollution source as well.

The Iowa Financial Incentives Program has addressed erosion control and water quality improvement for 30 years. As a voluntary approach, this program has not often received the recognition it is due, as compared to more widely known regulatory compliance actions.

Since 1973, more than 75,000 cooperators have matched dollar-for-dollar the State of Iowa’s contribution to install measures to reduce erosion and improve water quality. That’s a total investment of public and private funds of approximately \$364,620,000.

It is estimated that the Financial Incentives Program has conserved over 18 million tons of our precious topsoil. A good deal of that would have reached our rivers, streams and lakes. To put that into another perspective, picture in your mind a 10-ton dump truck, 20 feet long. Now, try to imagine 6,818 miles of dump trucks lined up bumper to bumper to empty soil into our rivers, lakes and streams.

It is important that we build on our strengths as a state and as a nation. In Iowa, our strength is our fertile topsoil. The Financial Incentive Program will continue to conserve our soil, allowing us to sustain viable agriculture, to provide for economic stability and to promote national security.

John Sellers, Chair
State Soil Conservation Committee of Iowa
11/14/03